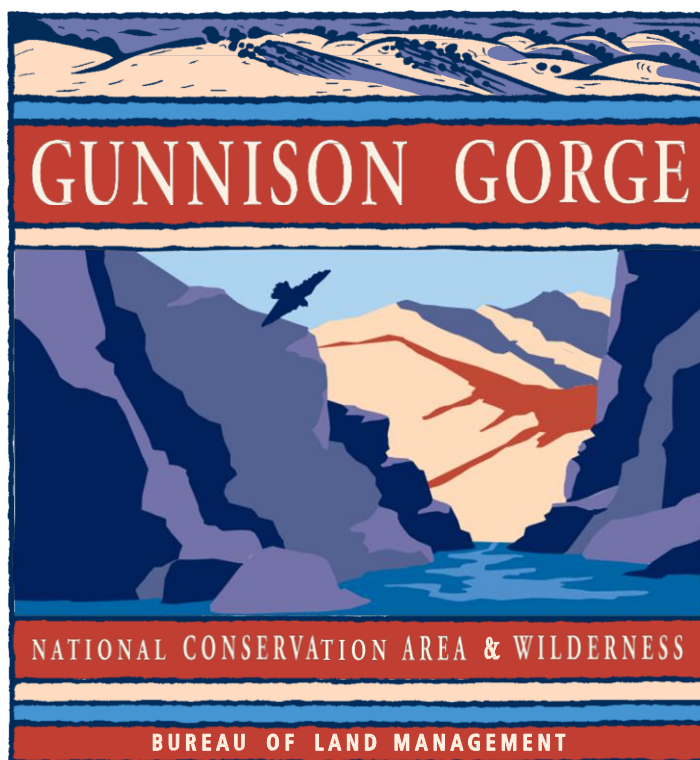


# Manager's

## Report Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area & Wilderness

October 1, 2011 - September 30, 2012



# Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area & Wilderness

## **Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (GGNCA – LLCOS05400)**

2505 South Townsend

Montrose, Colorado 81401

970-240-5309; 970-240-5368 fax

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/ggnca.html>

**NCA Staff:** Karen Tucker, Manager

Edd Franz, NCA Recreation Planner

Ted Moe, Law Enforcement Officer

Bruce “Rooster” Barnhart, Lead River Ranger



Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

**District Office:** Southwest Colorado District, Valori Armstrong, Manager

**Field Office:** Uncompahgre Field Office (LLCOS05000), Barbara Sharrow, Manager

**Total NCA Acreage:** 62,844 acres including 17,784 acres within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area

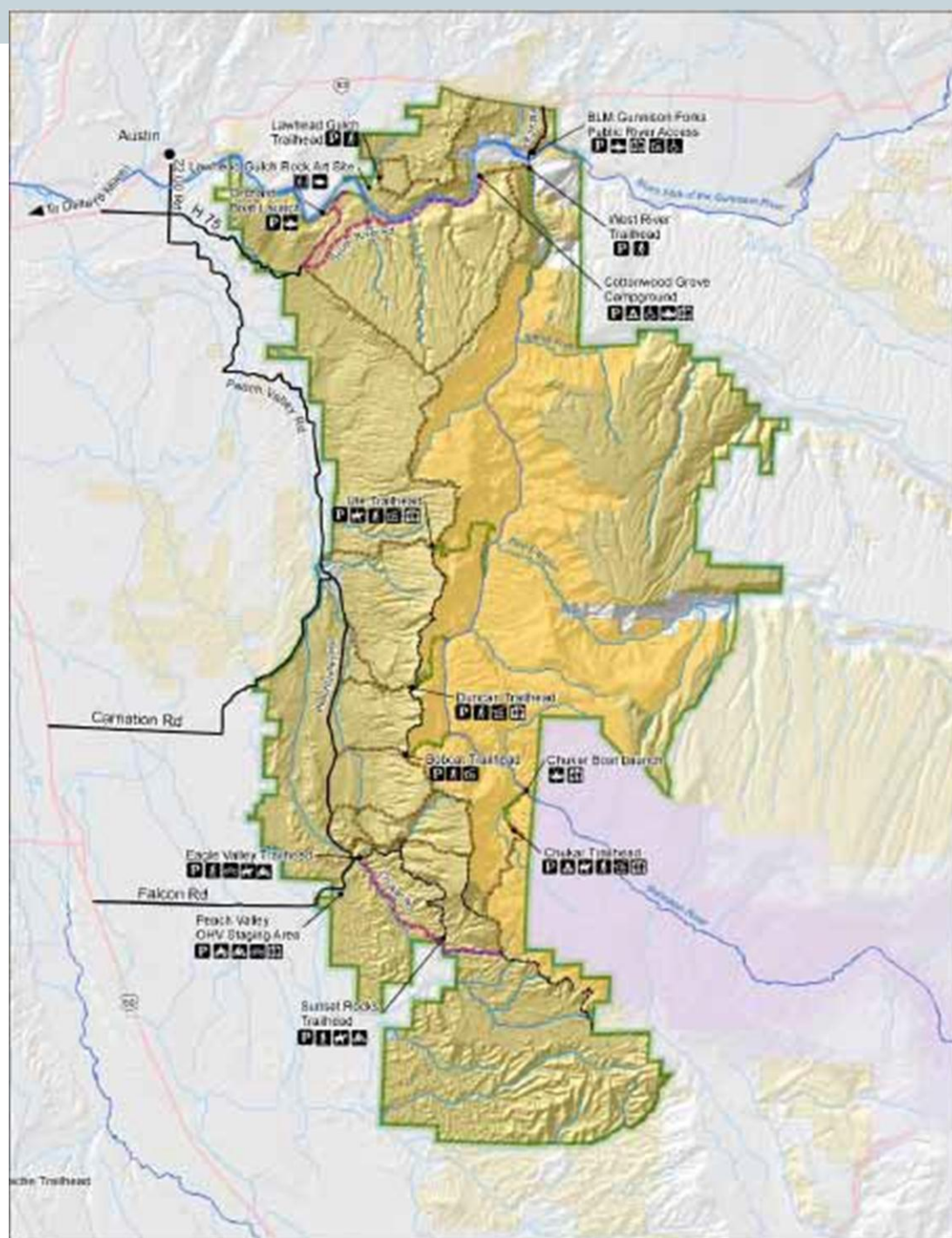
**Annual Visitation:** 92,700 visitors

**Management Plan:** Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision, November 2004

**CO03 Congressional District Representatives:** U.S. Senator Michael Bennet, U.S. Senator Mark Udall, U.S. Congressman Scott Tipton

**Establishing Authority:** Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999 (PL 106-76) and Black Canyon of the Gunnison Boundary Revision Act of 2003 (PL 108-78)

**NCA Values for Protection:** “Exceptional multiple use opportunities, natural, cultural, scenic, wilderness, and unsurpassed recreational resources.”



## Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

### BLM Roads and Trails

- Hiking Trail
- Paved Secondary Road
- Dirt/Gravel HC 2WD
- Primitive 4WD
- Single Track Motorized
- Access Roads

### OHV Open Areas

- Gunnison Gorge NCA

### Wilderness Areas

- BLM
- NPS

### OWNERSHIP

- BLM
- NPS
- Private





## Overview

The Gunnison Gorge NCA was designated in 1999 in recognition of its nationally significant geologic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and recreational resources. The NCA encompasses diverse natural landscapes, including dramatic adobe badlands formations, sprawling sagebrush flats, rugged oak brush and pinion-juniper covered slopes, and colorful canyons surrounding the spectacular Gunnison Gorge river canyon. These landscapes provide critical habitat for native species including sensitive plants and animals while also supporting traditional domestic sheep and cattle grazing.



Gunnison Gorge Wilderness

NCA lands provides outstanding opportunities for recreational uses such as boating and fishing, OHV use, mountain biking and equestrian use, hunting, hiking, camping, backpacking, and sightseeing. Annual visitation to the NCA is approximately 92,000 visitors.

The Gunnison Gorge Wilderness is famous for technical boating experiences and world-class trout fishing. The Gorge's trout biomass is 400+ pounds of trout per acre;



Gunnison River Rainbow Trout  
more than six times the

amount required for Colorado Gold Medal Trout Fishery designation. The June stone fly hatch which attracts world-wide fishers is an important economic boost to the community. Discoveries of an ancient Paleo-Indian occupation site and rare dinosaur tracks in the NCA have attracted increased visitors and academic interest.

In 2012, NCA and Uncompahgre Field Office (FO) resource specialists, recreation and biological seasonal employees, partners, and volunteers were involved in numerous projects, planning efforts, and other actions designed to: comply with NCA legislation and Bureau policies, and implement

management plan decisions and objectives for public land use, resource protection and visitor services. This report tracks resource condition trends and highlights work done by BLM and partners to provide for continued public benefit and enjoyment of the NCA's natural and heritage resources.

## Land Use Planning

### 2004 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The NCA's land use plan was completed in 2004, and an implementation strategy was completed in 2005. Strategy worksheets are updated annually to track work that: 1) achieves desired natural and heritage resource conditions; and 2) addresses demands for energy, minerals, forage and forest products, and community services and recreation.

We are currently implementing the RMP travel management plan, Gunnison Gorge Fee Area Management Plan, 2011 Crawford Area Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, and the 2011 North Rim Landscape Strategy.

# Protecting America's Natural and Heritage Resources

## A. NATURAL RESOURCE CONDITIONS TRENDS and LAND HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

The 2001 GGNCA Land Health Assessment covering 103,000 acres of public lands in and adjacent to the GGNCA was re-evaluated in 2011-2012. A new approach was taken to better address public land activities and uses, and improve data collection and identification of trends and factors which affect land health.

The BLM staff collaborated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) to assemble data and develop remedies and restoration efforts where needed.

The updated LHA determination shows:

- 44% of lands fully meet Colorado's Standards for Public Land Health; 37% of lands meet standards with some problems; 14% of lands do not meet standards; 5% of lands were not evaluated or were not applicable.
- At a landscape level, new findings do not reflect major shifts from 2001, with the same general areas showing land health problems.

Most areas not meeting standards are comprised of Mancos shale slopes and valley bottoms where native perennial vegetation is scarce due to past and current drought and domestic sheep grazing. Large infestations of non-native species and noxious weeds are significant factors in areas not meeting or meeting with problems.

Motorized and non-motorized vehicles and livestock are believed to be primary vectors for weed spread which is most notable along roads and trails. Other vectors include: wildlife, hikers, wind, heavy equipment, contaminated gravel, floods, and water transport of seeds.



Cottonwood plantings along the Gunnison River are part of our on-going river restoration program

On the positive side, riparian conditions along the Gunnison River remain stable or are improving as a result of camping regulations, fencing, and ongoing restoration projects including large-scale invasive plant removal and cottonwood and willow plantings.

All NCA streams except one, with high irrigation runoff salts, meet water quality standards. Macro-invertebrate and water quality sampling show improved conditions on the Smith Fork, a main Gunnison tributary.

Vegetation in the Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC continues to improve, with natives comprising the majority of species. Improvements are attributed to landscape -level vegetation projects including weed treatments, native plant seedings, and hydro-mulching of pinion-juniper trees that encroach on grouse habitat and big game wintering areas.

Other improvements are the result of better livestock management over the last 20 years; though wildlife and domestic grazing still pose problems to sage grouse areas.



## B. NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY and MONITORING

In addition to periodic land health assessments, BLM conducts annual inventories, inspections, compliance checks, and resource monitoring efforts to track resource conditions and trends and identify areas of concern or improvement. When problems are discovered, NCA and field office teams and partners work on developing mitigation measures, adaptive management actions, and environmental assessments for resource protection and restoration projects to resolve the issues.

Invasive plant and noxious weed inventories and monitoring are done annually with Delta and Montrose counties. Photo points and field inspections show we are making significant progress in controlling the spread of tamarisk and Russian knapweed along riparian areas and in recreation sites.



Hydrologist Jedd Sondergard installing river monitoring wells

Monitoring wells installed along the Gunnison River in 2009 and 2012 provided our BLM ecologist data on changing riverbank and flow conditions and groundwater salinity levels which helped determine optimum planting locations and times for this year's riparian rehabilitation projects.

A NCA climate monitoring station provides BLM, CPW, USGS, NPS, and USFS with data about current weather, long-term climate change, and drought, fire, and rangeland conditions on the east side of the NCA and in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The data was critical to the timing of

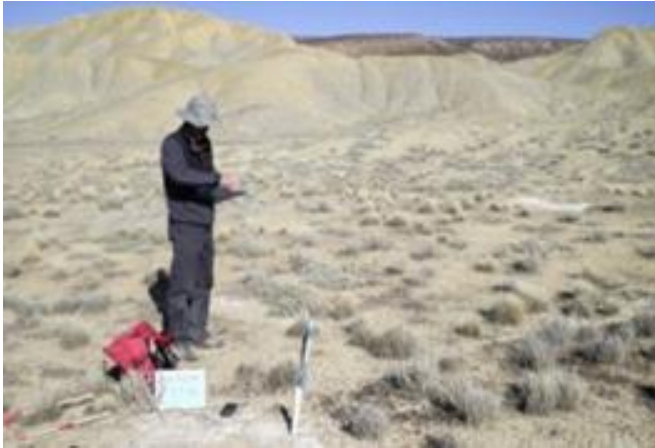


Ecologist Amanda Clements and Recreation Planner  
Blake Treadway inspect a spring development

2012 vegetation treatments for big game and sage grouse habitat enhancement projects.

Annual rangeland utilization monitoring provides data on forage used by livestock during a grazing season. Compliance checks are conducted to monitor livestock numbers, grazing allotments, and range conditions. The data was used to set grazing limits in the Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC to protect nesting habitat and it was also important in working with grazing permittees to adjust grazing strategies in response to severe drought in the region.

Grouse habitat sites and bird population numbers are monitored annually in conjunction with CPW and other Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group partners. Data helps determine leks being used by the birds and where more measures are needed to improve habitat. This year, the Group adopted a coordinated lek count protocol which resulted in higher lek counts than in the past. The Crawford population 2012 is now estimated at 99 birds, an increase of 55 birds from 2011.



Collecting land health data in the Peach Valley Recreation Area

Plant communities of endangered clay loving buckwheat, threatened Colorado hookless cactus, and other sensitive species were monitored in the Native Plant and Fairview Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and high use NCA areas. New populations of buckwheat and cactus were inventoried this year and we increased monitoring at the sites while working on long-term protection strategies.

Our OHV crew's 2012 trail counter data shows recreation use continues to increase at Peach Valley, Flat Top, and Elephant Skin OHV Recreation Areas. These areas have become year-round destinations for multi-day stays by OHV users and now require increased maintenance and patrols to deal with unauthorized uses including off-route travel, resource damage, target shooting, trash dumping, partying, and vandalism.



Biologists and river rangers team up on a macro-invertebrate survey in the Wilderness.

Our recreation planner worked with our river rangers and range, wildlife, hydrology, and biology specialists on the "Keep It Wild" Wilderness inventory in the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness. The report provides baseline data for a national database that tracks protection of wilderness values on BLM lands.

NCA river rangers conducted 37 river and 58 ground patrols in the NCA and Wilderness to collect use data and monitor resources. They contacted 2,600+ visitors to assist and educate them and ensure compliance with wilderness, fee, and resource protection regulations. The rangers also assisted FO staff on resource projects including riparian studies and plantings, weed removal, cultural inventories, and sage grouse habitat improvements. Seasonal river ranges are essential to provide on-the-ground BLM presence and visitor services.



River rangers Shawn Folkerts, Ryan Mathis, and Aaron Black help out on a riparian protection project

Our Gunnison River Recreation Area is receiving increased year-round use and impacts from illegal camping, firewood cutting, and improper disposal of human waste. This year we saw more incidents of motorized users ignoring or destroying route closures, barricades and gates on non-system routes.

Additional vandal-resistant signs, vehicle restrictors, camping regulations and patrols added this year are not completely effective in reducing user non-compliance and resource impacts.





Hikers explore the historic Ute Trail

### C. HERITAGE RESOURCES CONDITION TRENDS, INVENTORY, and MONITORING

The NCA contains important cultural, archaeological, and paleontological resources including National Register historic sites, dinosaur track ways, rock art panels, and Fremont Indian occupation sites, including the nationally significant Eagle Rock Shelter site. The site shows occupation dating back over 12,800 years, making it one of the 20 oldest known Paleo-Indian sites in North America.

Eagle Rock shelter, Sidewinder Shelter, Howell Village historic structures, and other important sites are monitored by volunteer site stewards. All sites are in stable condition, though monitoring shows a need for ongoing maintenance of rock walls at Howell Village due to continued natural erosion

Site surveillance instruments installed at the Eagle Rock Shelter site show no additional vandalism has occurred since late 2011. A contract for complete excavation of the site was awarded this year and work is scheduled to begin in Spring 2013.

Our FO archaeologist, Glade Hadden, completed fifty acres of cultural resource inventory on the Smith Mountain lithic quarry site. Due to limitations of FO staff time and funding; only 18 percent of the NCA has been inventoried and much more work is needed to determine the extent of the NCA's heritage resources.

Paleontological inventories conducted on 600 acres by GEOCorps interns over the past three summers documented a number of significant Jurassic and Cretaceous trackways.

Ongoing work with permittees to adjust sheep allotment grazing patterns is resulting in a net benefit to cultural resources by reducing animal use impacts at sites. However, we documented more incidents of casual collecting at some sites and increased visitation at all sites which may lead to more vandalism and artifact collecting. In response to this trend, we increased monitoring to help protect these areas.



The Eagle Rock Shelter site has yielded artifacts dating back 12,800+ years





A visitor takes in the spectacular views of the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness

## Providing Recreation and Visitor Experiences

### A. FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

The NCA shares office space with the Uncompahgre Field Office. We maintain seven major NCA entrance sites, 52 developed recreation sites, and 60+ dispersed campsites, access areas, overlooks, and other high-use areas. Annual monitoring showed all NCA facilities in overall “good condition” although a few sites required minor corrections to meet safety standards.

Facilities are maintained by one permanent employee shared with the FO. Vandalism is a chronic problem at all our recreation sites and it is a challenge to cover costs for vandalism repair, basic cleaning supplies, toilet pumping, fences and barricades, road maintenance, weed control, trash removal, and seasonal and LEO patrols.

Congrats to Colorado State Parks OHV program award winners Chad Greiner and Al Griffin!!



### B. COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT

The NCA has 70+ miles of roads and 350+ miles of designated trails which provide opportunities for exciting motorized and non-motorized adventures. BLM works with Delta and Montrose counties on maintenance of main access roads to ensure safe public access.

We have completed approximately 80% of RMP travel management decisions with the help of our OHV crew and river rangers who maintained 400+ miles of routes this year.



Our OHV crew is essential for ensuring visitor compliance with travel management regulations.

The OHV crew also maintained 800+ travel management signs and installed 300 new signs this year. Nearly a third of the signs were shot, driven over, or stolen and many signs needed to be replaced two to three times a season.

Our OHV crew is funded by a Colorado State Trails grant. This year, crew members Chad Greiner and Al Griffin were named “Resource Managers of the Year” in acknowledgment of the great travel management work they do and their outstanding OHV training training and stewardship programs for local youths.

## OUTREACH, INTERPRETATION, and ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The majority of visitor contacts are by BLM law enforcement officers, river rangers, and maintenance personnel out in the NCA. Though both Montrose and Delta are considering building visitor centers, there are no centers in either gateway city. NCA Manager Karen Tucker represents public lands on the Delta Tourism Cabinet and also works with Montrose tourism providers on outreach, websites, brochures, and events to increase public land awareness.

Our NCA website contains user information, regulations, photos, outfitter lists and downloadable brochures, maps, and podcasts including our Gunnison Gorge video. A Quick Read (QR) barcode for the video is included in our NCA brochure and on signs.

The NCA and UFO fund a visitor services/volunteer coordinator for front desk services, volunteer administration, and education and outreach. Our coordinator, Katie Phillips, was trained to correlate BLM education programs with new Colorado standards and then helped staff incorporate the standards into our programs.

Katie presented sessions on volunteer recruitment and the NCA's Take It Outside youth programs at Colorado's "Teaching Outside the Box" environmental education conference and the 2012 Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado Forum and worked with our Friends Group, Colorado Canyons Association (CCA) on education programs and events.

Glade Hadden is always in high demand for his NCA archaeology and paleontology interpretative programs. Glade gave presentations to the Colorado Archaeological Society and Montrose County Historical Society and presented professional papers at the Rocky Mountain Anthropological Conference and the Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.



NCA Recreation Planner Edd Franz greets students at "Take It Outside" Cottonwood Education Days

Glade also taught middle schools students about Ute prehistory and westward expansion.

Our NCA river rangers conducted twenty educational outings this year with schools, friends groups, at-risk youth and underserved populations, volunteers, and local and state agencies. Participants received hands-on training about resource management and protection and user ethics while assisting with monitoring, restoration, education, and trail projects.



The river rangers partnered with Montrose and Delta Sheriffs, NPS rangers, and helicopter pilots (*photo*) on a Gorge raft trip to determine locations for staging search and rescue activities under varying water flows and conditions.





## ENGAGING YOUTH IN AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

### A. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Our OHV crew includes two middle school teachers who engaged 30 local youths (*above photo*) this year in the NCA's OHV training program which emphasizes proper riding and stewardship programs such as "Stay the Trail," "Right Rider," and "Leave No Trace." Since 2005, over 550 K-12 students have participated in the training.

The crew also worked with 25 students in local dirt bike clubs and held 15 meetings and trail rides to foster responsible riding on public lands. The clubs assisted with patrols, maintenance, and networking with users to spread the word about OHV regulations, volunteer events, and user ethics.

Our river rangers partner annually with Montrose County Health and Human Services to engage at-risk youth in the Teen Companion Program. This year, youth inventoried recreation impacts to campsites along a Gunnison River segment managed for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River Preservation System. The teens also learned about public lands and "Leave No Trace" ethics for river corridor recreation.

Families attending Outdoor Heritage Days in Delta learned about outdoor activities available on public lands from our river rangers. BLM provided inflatable kayaks and basic paddling training for parents and kids which hopefully, sparked their continued interest in outdoor adventures.

Recreation Planner Julie Jackson and her three boys enjoyed a day of paddling at Outdoor Heritage Days (*photo right*).



Gunnison High School teacher Leo Malloy has recruited teens from his Outdoor Education and Recreation Club (*above photo*) for many years for NCA stewardship projects. The club maintained the Ute Trail and learned about the NCA's natural resources, boating safety and "Leave No Trace" ethics.



River ranger Rooster Barnhart mentored a youth on an Eagle Scout project which included planning and training volunteers for a wilderness trail project (*above photo*).



# TAKE IT OUTSIDE!!

## Cottonwood Education Days

We teamed up with CPW, USFS, Gunnison Gorge Anglers Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Conservation Center, and CCA volunteers to provide a four-day outdoor classroom for 600 middle school students in celebration of our fourth annual Cottonwood Education Days “Take it Outside” event. Classroom modules (*photos*) included fly-tying, aquatic life studies, discovery hikes, web-of-life activities, and art and journaling. TIO funds covered bus transportation, substitute teachers, and filming of a video. (<http://vimeo.com/53694468>)



## B. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

### Interns/BLM STEP Program

We work with Montrose High School to fund student interns each year. This year we also partnered with Colorado Youth Corps Association who took on intern administration. This new avenue provided students an added benefit of being part of the Youth Corps program while working in BLM’s Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).



Ty Skoe (*photo left*) was a BLM river ranger in GGNCA and DE-NCA. Courtney Chism worked on recreation databases, permits, and outreach efforts.

### Youth Corps

We employed a Western Colorado Conservation Corps crew (*photo below*) to work with our OHV crew to repair trail sections contributing to resource damage and erosion problems and close illegal routes off of the popular Red Rocks Rim Trail.





## FRIENDS GROUPS and VOLUNTEERS

For over 20 years, we have worked with user groups, non-profits, tourism providers, local schools, colleges, and individuals in the Gunnison Gorge Friends Network on conservation and stewardship projects.

This year's volunteers contributed 2,733 hours and hosted workers from Delta Corrections Center (DCC) added another 2,523 hours of work for a total of 5,256 hours valued at \$109,545. Hosted worker hours were reduced by half this year due to a lack of DCC supervisors.

2012 projects including: river cleanup projects; trail maintenance; cultural site monitoring; volunteer training; project coordination; weed control; recreation, wildlife, and plant inventories; fishery recovery projects; Gunnison sage grouse lek monitoring; Adopt-A-Trail projects; environmental education; and front desk visitor services.

CCA provided staff, volunteers, and funds for our Cottonwood Education Days and National Public Lands Day and participated in our National River Awareness Week community float and stakeholder meetings on Gunnison River restoration projects. The group also sponsored a Montrose Wild and Scenic Film to help raise funds for restoration and protection projects in the NCA.

With the significant commitment and heartfelt contributions of funding, time, and energy of all our wonderful volunteers, we met many more of our objectives for protecting, enhancing, and restoring the NCA than would have been possible without their help.



**We sincerely thank our friends groups, volunteers, and our science and cooperative conservation partners for another great year of stewardship in the Gunnison Gorge NCA!!**





## SCIENCE and CONSERVATION PARTNERS

The Geological Society of America helped fund our 2012 GeoCorps intern, Sharon McMullen, a paleontology graduate student. Sharon inventoried 200 acres of the NCA's Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary area and found many dinosaur, plant, and animal life fossils, and discovered dozens of dinosaur trackways.

Sharon also developed an interpretive paleontology poster for the NCA and presented her findings at the National Geographic Society conference.

We worked with Dr. Martin Lockley of the Denver Museum and a team of South Korean scientists on a NCA Dinosaur Trackways study. Castings were made of Cretaceous era dinosaur and crocodile tracks; including one very rare track that retained skin impressions from the foot of the dinosaur that made it.



BLM archaeologist Glade Hadden and geologists look for fossil outcrops along the Ute Fault



Scientists measure and cast dinosaur and crocodile tracks along the Sun Cliff Trail.



GEOCorps intern Sharon McMullen with Hadrosaur track



Very rare skin impressions on a track of a Cretaceous Era dinosaur

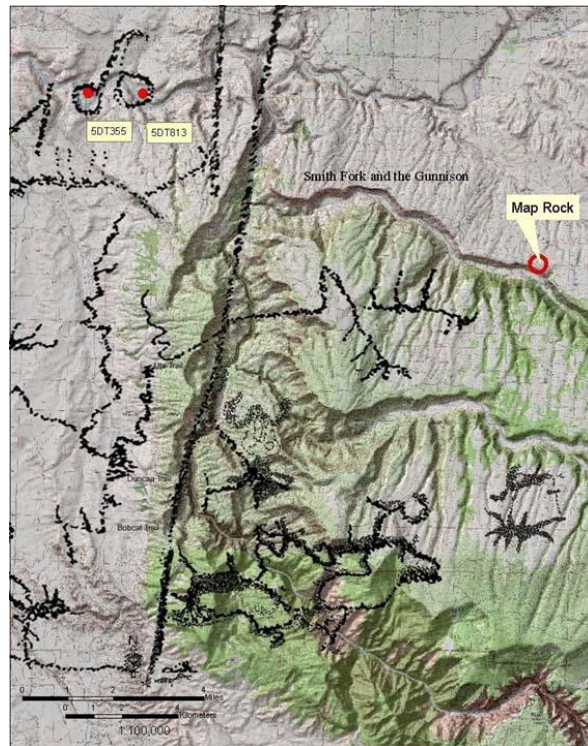


Dr. David Noe (*photo*) used state-of-the-art geologic maps he created for the Colorado Geological Survey to explain the origins of the Gunnison River basin to NCA visitors at a presentation sponsored by BLM, CCA, and The Conservation Center. We plan to expand this program into a NCA lecture series with our other science partners in the future.

Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP) staff and volunteers helped us monitor sensitive plant species in the Fairview and Native Plan ACECs and assisted with increased resource protection and monitoring plans for newly discovered endangered clay-loving buckwheat sites.



NCA visitors learn about NCA geology from Dr. David Noe

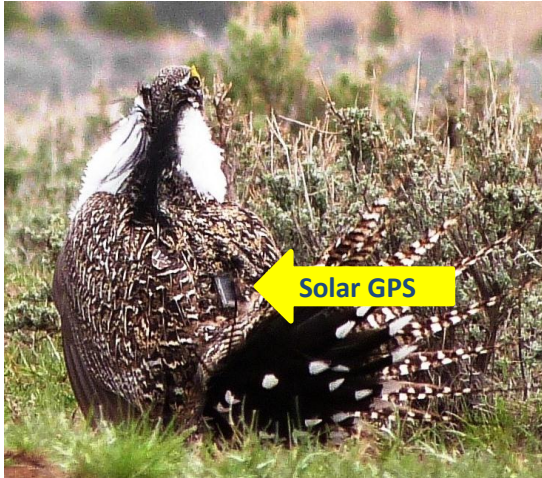


Consultation with Ute tribes has verified the pictographs on the rock (*right*) to be a map of the Gunnison River which is shown as the straight north-south line on the rock and corresponding map (*left*). Also depicted are trails, and sage grouse and big game hunting areas frequented by the Utes.

A NLCS science grant for our Ute Rock Art Map Project funded consultation with Ute tribes, 300 acres of cultural survey, and a Dominguez Anthropological Resource Group (DARG) report that verified the

correlation of 1600 to 1800 A.D. rock art panels at Eagle Rock Shelter and along the Smith Fork to the pre-historic Ute and historic Stemwinder cattle trail in the Gorge Wilderness. The panels depict the Gunnison River and sage grouse, deer and elk hunting areas that correspond to our Gunnison sage grouse ACEC and big game winter range sites.





Male Gunnison sage grouse with solar GPS backpack

### Crawford Area Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group

The Working Group has been an outstanding BLM partnership for over 20 years. The group is comprised of: CPW, NPS, USGS, USFS, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), Black Canyon and National Audubon Societies, Uncompahgre Partnership (UP); county commissioners, range permittees, land-owners, and interested citizens. 2012 science and conservation work included:

- USGS data collected using road counters, elk GPS collars, and solar GPS transmitters on grouse is helping to find new lek sites, determine traffic effects on elk migration routes and grouse populations dynamics, and identify best locations for restoration projects.

- BLM Healthy Lands Initiative funds restored 2,000 acres of native sage brush with a mechanical hydro-ax treatment, which removed invasive trees, and seeding of native grasses and forbs.
- CPW transplanted 30 grouse with VHF transmitters into the ACEC. Group members also conducted lek counts and tracked transplanted birds to determine use of habitat areas.
- NPS funded youth corps crews worked on a fencing project to reduce grazing and weed impacts in grouse areas, and worked with Delta and Montrose counties, BLM, UP and land-owners on 20 acres of weed treatments.



Working group members and volunteers celebrated National Public Lands Day working on a Gunnison sage grouse protection project

- NRCS worked with landowners on conservation easements, sustainable grazing systems, and other assistance to implement grouse conservation actions on adjacent private lands.
- NWTf, BLM staff, local high schools students, and group volunteers celebrated National Public Lands Day by installing perch deterrents and vinyl markers on fences around wet meadow areas to prevent raptors from perching and grouse from flying into the fence. The group also installed an interpretive sign about Gunnison sage grouse and their habitat.



Volunteers install raptor perch deterrents around a new wet meadow development in the Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC





TU President Marshall Pendergrass helps out on a Gunnison River fishery recovery project



CPW Biologist, Dan Kowalski, prepares for take-off with a cargo of whirling disease resistant Hofer fry.

### Trout Unlimited Resource Protection and Outreach Projects

For over 25 years, the Gunnison Gorge Anglers Chapter of Trout Unlimited has provided volunteers and significant funding for NCA projects including land acquisitions, fishery restoration, and education projects.

This year TU again assisted CPW in stocking Hofer fry, a whirling disease resistant trout strain being used to re-establish a wild rainbow trout fishery in the Gunnison River. TU volunteers also taught youths how to tie flies at our annual Cottonwood Education Days and provided NCA fishing information at their annual Montrose Fly Fishing Show.



### Relief Ditch Riparian Restoration Project

Construction began in fall 2012 on the Relief Ditch Riparian Restoration Project, a NCA partnership which includes: Trout Unlimited, CPW, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Western Slope Conservation Center, and the Colorado River Water Conservation District.

In addition to reconstructing a diversion dam to reduce boater and fisher hazards and impacts to native fishery, the project when completed in 2013, will better protect river values and assure full delivery of irrigation water to area farmers. The project also extends restoration work done over the past five years by BLM, Delta County, and UP to remove tamarisk and other invasive plants and restore native vegetation along 14 miles of the Gunnison River in the NCA and Wilderness.



Top photo: The existing dam structure poses hazards to fish and recreationists. Bottom photo: Project construction will be completed in 2013.



Equestrians explore the NCA's colorful adobe badlands

## Business Practices

### A. STAFFING AND BUDGET

The NCA's full-time staff includes a manager, outdoor recreation planner, law enforcement officer, and a six-month lead park ranger. A full-time facility maintenance employee and volunteer/visitor services coordinator are shared with the Field Office. 2012 seasonals and interns, funded by the FO, GGNCA, and the Dominguez-Escalante NCA, included four river rangers and a maintenance worker who provided visitor services in all three areas. Three OHV seasonals worked in the NCA and FO funded by a state park grant and BLM Challenge Cost Share.

Total funding for 2012 was \$831,330, including \$524,700 in labor expenses and \$306,630 in procurement funds. The NCA funded field office specialists' time for work in cultural resources, geology and paleontology, range and invasive weed management, visitor services, administration, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) work, lands and minerals, and biological programs.

Procurement costs included: facility maintenance and vandalism repair materials; fencing materials; weed control chemicals and safety equipment; visitor services (displays, signs, brochures, etc.); law enforcement equipment; and vehicle, travel, and training costs. Contracts and services included: toilet pumping; Delta Corrections Crew support; invasive weed spraying; and habitat protection and restoration projects for sage grouse, big game, and riparian areas.

Item	Cost
<i>Labor</i>	<b>\$ 524,700</b>
<i>Travel &amp; Training</i>	<b>\$ 5,884</b>
<i>Supplies/Materials</i>	<b>\$ 70,374</b>
<i>Vehicles</i>	<b>\$ 60,262</b>
<i>Contracts &amp; Agreements</i>	<b>\$ 170,110</b>
<b>TOTAL 2012 GGNCA BUDGET</b>	<b>\$ 831,330</b>

### B. RECREATION FEE PROGRAM

Permit fees are charged in the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness for day and overnight use by private and commercial users. Fee revenues from 4,578 Wilderness permits totaled \$23,126. We also manage 22 commercial permits for whitewater boating, float and walk-in guided fishing, horse packing and jet boat services, vehicle shuttles, and hunting. BLM collected 3% of gross from the permits which totaled \$31,900.

Fees help fund seasonal river rangers and support costs which include: swift water rescue and Wilderness First Responder training; boat and safety equipment; and vehicle shuttles, horse pack-ins, and per diem for overnight patrols. Fees support resource protection projects including: facility, trail, and campsite maintenance; invasive weed treatments; riparian enhancements; and fund education efforts and purchase of "Wag-bags" to pack out human waste from the Wilderness that are provided to visitors at no additional charge.



Fees help fund river ranger training and resource protection and youth education projects





